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Letter dated 10 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement made on 7 March 2009 by the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. D. A. Medvedev, concerning conclusion of an agreement with the United States of America to replace the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 89.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 10 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Conclusion of an agreement with the United States of America to replace the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms

The Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START Treaty) expires on 5 December 2009. It is hard to overestimate the significance of this document in maintaining international peace and stability. The Treaty has played a historic role in ensuring strategic stability and security and in reducing the arsenals of strategic offensive arms. Its implementation has made the world more secure.

Today we are facing an urgent need to move forward on the road to nuclear disarmament. The Russian Federation is fully committed to the goal of freeing the world from this most lethal weapon, in accordance with its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Already in 2005 we proposed to the United States of America that a new agreement be concluded to replace the START Treaty. It could be based on all the best elements that have been working effectively in the current Treaty and at the same time reflect the strategic realities of today.

In taking such a decision, we considered, inter alia, the fact that the reduction levels set by the START Treaty were already achieved in 2001. At present the number of strategic delivery vehicles and warheads attached to them is significantly lower. The START Treaty therefore not only no longer limits the nuclear missiles of the Russian Federation and the United States of America but actually allows them to increase the numbers of strategic offensive arms.

Our approach to this agreement is as follows. The future agreement must be legally binding. It is equally important that the document be forward-looking and limit not only warheads but also their strategic delivery vehicles: intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers.

We also consider it necessary to exclude the possibility of deploying strategic offensive arms outside national territories.

I should like to emphasize that the Russian Federation is open to dialogue and is prepared for negotiations with the new United States Administration. I fully share the commitment of the United States President, Mr. Obama, to the noble goal of saving the world from the nuclear threat and I see this as a rewarding area for joint work.

I believe that constructive cooperation in this area will contribute to a general improvement in relations between the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

D. Medvedev